



Michigan Milk Producers Association

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June 24, 2009

Representative Mike Simpson, Chairman
House Agriculture Committee
307 House Office Building
Lansing, MI

Dear Chairman Simpson and Members of House Agriculture Committee:

On behalf of the nearly 2,300 members of Michigan Milk Producers Association (MMPA), we appreciate the opportunity to express our support of House Bill No. 5127 and No. 5128 regarding the regulation of livestock animal health and welfare within the state and the creation of an Animal Care Advisory Committee.

The dairy industry has a long tradition of superior animal care that enables dairy farmers to provide a healthy, safe and wholesome milk supply to the consumer. The proposed legislation outlines the steps farmers must take to ensure the well-being of their animals and provides reassurance to consumers that animals are well treated and cared for in the production of meat, eggs and dairy products. As consumers are more removed from farm production practices, there is an increasing need to know that the animals that provide meat, milk, and eggs are raised in a humane and ethical manner.

The legislation specifically references the National Dairy FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) program as the standards for the dairy industry. The National Dairy FARM program was created by the National Milk Producers Federation and the Dairy Management, Inc. to demonstrate and verify that U.S. dairy farmers are committed to providing the highest standards of animal care and quality assurance. At this year's state annual meeting, MMPA delegates endorsed the Dairy FARM program in the following resolution:

"We believe in and support the humane treatment of animals. We recognize the importance of maintaining a sound animal care program on our farms... We further applaud the efforts of National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) and Dairy Management Inc. (DMI) for their role in launching the National Dairy FARM Program: Farmers Assuring Responsible Management. Dairy FARM was formed to bolster consumer trust and confidence in the U.S. dairy industry and demonstrate the industry's commitment to the highest levels of animal care and quality assurance. We encourage producers to participate in on-farm well-being programs such as the Dairy FARM Program."

The National Dairy FARM program includes an animal care manual which incorporates science-based guidelines for the overall well being of dairy animals. The guidelines cover the following areas: nutrition, management, animal health, housing and facilities, handling, movement and transportation. Throughout the entire set of guidelines, references are made to science-based research regarding proven, best management practices.

Another feature of the program is the supplemental training materials that will be provided to employers and employees to assist producers in implementing the procedures and best practices on the farm.

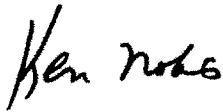
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Two key elements of the National Dairy FARM program are the on-farm evaluations and the third-party verification of the program. The on-farm evaluation provides the producer with an external review of animal care practices based on the guidelines. The third party verification protects the integrity of the program and provides quantifiable verification that producers are meeting their ethical obligations to provide appropriate care for their animals.

The National Dairy FARM program is in the final stages of development. We anticipate it will be formally launched to the industry, customers and consumers in early October.

We appreciate your consideration of this legislation and urge you to support both HB 5127 and HB 5128. As a dairy farmer, I know the commitment dairy farmers across Michigan make to treat their cows with respect and care, knowing that it is the proper and humane thing to do for the animal and our livelihood. This legislation serves to reinforce our members' commitment to animal care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Nobis". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ken Nobis
President